

SR 169 Corridor Study

Corridor Working Group Session

Meeting Summary

Meeting date: August 10, 2005

Location: Lake Wilderness Lodge
(22500 SE 248th Street, Maple Valley, WA 98038)

Attendees: ***Partners in attendance:***

Keith Woolley – City of Renton (on behalf of Nick Afzali)
Dave Zielinski – City of Maple Valley
Jason Paulsen – City of Black Diamond
Chris Searcy – City of Enumclaw
Mark Melroy – King County
Mike Cummings – Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC)
Barbara Briggs – WSDOT, Northwest Region
Seth Stark – WSDOT, Urban Planning Office

Partners not in attendance:

Ann Martin – King County
Nick Afzali – City of Renton

Others in attendance:

Chris Picard, Renee Zimmerman – WSDOT, Urban Planning Office
Josh Kahan – King County
Joan Burlingame – Friends of Rock Creek Valley, Back Country Horsemen
Linda Hanson – WRIA 9 Team
Greg Wingard – Middle Green River Coalition
Keith Sabol, Cathy Higley, Pamela Arora – Parsons Transportation Group
Kristine dos Remedios – EnviroIssues

**Welcome
and
Goals for the
Day**

Seth Stark, WSDOT, welcomed the partners and thanked them for taking the time to attend the Corridor Working Group (CWG) session. Seth also thanked Dave Zielinski for hosting the meeting. Attendees introduced themselves and shared the name of the organization or jurisdiction they were representing.

Seth Stark reviewed the session agenda and informed the group of recent changes in the last few months. WSDOT is currently looking to replace Kamuron Gurol and Mike Cummings. Kamuron Gurol is now

working for the City of Sammamish and Carol Hunter is acting as his interim replacement. Mike Cummings started a position with PSRC and is coincidentally the new CWG representative. Cathy Higley with Parsons Transportation Group has also joined the project team to act as the day-to-day Project Manager.

**March 2005
Open House
Summary**

Seth Stark reminded the group that a summary of the SR 169 March open houses held in Maple Valley and Enumclaw, as well as a detailed table of comments, was sent to the partners the week prior. The project team received comments regarding all areas of the SR 169 corridor. Safety was a main concern, for not only vehicles but also for pedestrians walking along the corridor and standing at intersections. Congestion was also identified as an issue to be addressed.

The public's comments have been incorporated into the list of previously identified projects that will be analyzed as part of the process to recommend for transportation solutions in the final Route Development Plan (RDP). WSDOT is not simply cataloging the comments, but hopes to address the public's concerns through the projects recommended in the final RDP.

**Future
Baseline
Modeling**

Seth Stark briefly explained the considerations that went into the 2030 baseline travel demand model used in the traffic modeling analysis. The model is based on the King County Travel Demand Model with some adjustments made to reflect more detailed local models. Seth reminded the CWG that the land use and socio-economic data (employment and population projections) upon which the forecasts are based were reviewed by local agency technical representatives at a meeting in December 2004. Generally, the socio-economic data forecast are somewhat higher than what is included in the King County and PSRC models. Current traffic counts along the corridor have been run through the baseline model to give the project team a picture of what the corridor will look like in 2030.

Seth asked if there were any additional questions regarding the baseline model. There were none.

**Existing
Traffic and
Safety
Conditions**

Cathy Higley, Parsons, gave presented a PowerPoint presentation on existing traffic and safety conditions. The goal of the presentation was to present the group with an overview of existing traffic conditions and safety issues within each segment of the SR 169 corridor. The consultant team will provide an overview of the types of solutions identified to address any corridor deficiencies.

Seth noted that some options may overlap and apply to the same designated area. These potentially conflicting options would both not likely prevail through the upcoming initial screening and the following more detailed level of analysis.

For each segment, Cathy Higley reported on:

- travel times taken in the field at off and on-peak PM hours,
- 2004 and projected 2030 average daily traffic volumes,
- traffic flow conditions,
- total number of accidents between 2002 & 2004,
- types of accidents, and
- pedestrian and automobile accident locations.

Please refer to the SR 169 Existing Conditions and Proposed Project Solutions PowerPoint presentation for a detailed description of the existing traffic and safety conditions for each corridor segment.

Comments and questions from CWG members are listed below according to segment:

Renton Segment:

- Chris Searcy asked Keith Woolley if he thought the level of service (LOS) reported in the presentation seemed reasonable for the City of Renton, based on his local knowledge. Keith said the numbers did seem reasonable, except for the acceptable LOS identified at the intersection just east of I-405. The City of Renton is looking to move the signal at that intersection further away from the I-405 interchange to improve traffic flow.

Cedar River Segment:

- Dave Zielinski noted that there may be an acceptable LOS at some of the signalized intersections, but the congestion before the signal is the problem. Different conditions may be experienced in the evening hours, but in the morning hours, there is heavy congestion through intersections in all segments.
- Chris Picard said it may be beneficial to look at the peak period counts instead of just the PM peak, as it is reported here.
- Chris Searcy asked if the model can incorporate the improvements to the I-405 interchange. Cathy Higley explained that the model does respond to transportation improvements but reacts little to operational improvements, which are the majority of the improvements being made on I-405.

Maple Valley Segment

- Chris Searcy asked if the travel times reported in minutes were

observed or modeled. Cathy Higley explained that these were observed, based on the posted speed limit in each segment.

- Dave Zielinski noted that there are some sections within the Maple Valley segment that experience much higher daily traffic counts. For example, the section between the Wax and Witte intersections are experiencing something like 40,000 ADT, according to the Existing Conditions Memorandum put together by John Pascal of the Transpo Group. The team will need to address these localized areas of congestion or high traffic flow in the RDP, and not just look at the average ADT of each segment.

EDIT NOTE: It has since been noted that the ADTs listed along the SR 169 corridor in the powerpoint presentation were listed by segment. The previous Transpo Group Existing Conditions Memorandum had the ADTs listed by intersection. The corrected powerpoint presentation is available from WSDOT.

- Dave Zielinski also noted that the percentage of truck traffic is not shown. The truck traffic is significant throughout the whole corridor and comprises something like 11% of the traffic along the corridor.
- Mike Cummings asked Dave Zielinski if truck traffic is considered to be all trucks or big rigs only. Dave explained that the truck traffic includes vans and delivery trucks as well as the large gravel trucks that travel along the corridor. In addition, truck traffic is concentrated before the peak hour, as truck traffic is regulated to only the non-peak hours of the day.

Black Diamond Segment

- No comments were made.

Rural/Agricultural Segment

- Chris Searcy asked if the model, when considering travel time, considers how fast a truck can accelerate after being stopped at an intersection or going up a hill. This kind of operational issue can really affect how long it takes traffic to travel the corridor. Cathy Higley explained that the model does not deal with vehicle mix or topography very well and does not reflect moving conditions that affect operations in its results.

Enumclaw Segment

- No comments were made.

Potential Traffic Flow and Safety Improvements

Cathy Higley showed examples of all the potential traffic flow improvements that can be made to improve traffic flow and safety in each segment. The types of projects under consideration include:

- traffic signals/roundabouts,
- channelization,
- widening/shoulder improvements,
- pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements, and
- truck route(s) (location(s) not determined)

The group discussed how roundabouts work, especially for truck traffic. Seth Stark explained that the roundabout design typically has what is called an apron instead of a curb, which is designed for wider traffic to drive over if necessary. Chris Picard noted that a roundabout was just put in on Highway 203, which also has a lot of truck traffic. There have been no problems with the improvement. There was a lot of public resistance to the idea of a roundabout on that highway, but once the roundabout was installed, there was a lot of support for the project. Roundabouts do take up more space than a conventional intersection. The graphic presented in the powerpoint is not to comparable scale, it will be corrected. Cathy Higley said that a roundabout is just one option for an intersection improvement that could reduce congestion and increase safety. These options will all be considered and the improvement that makes the most sense will be implemented.

Cathy Higley, then gave examples of the potential safety improvements under study for each segment including:

- street lighting and horizontal curve,
- channelization (roadway restriping),
- roadway alignment, and
- pedestrian, bicycle, transit improvements.

Cathy Higley concluded with a summary of the types of traffic flow and safety improvements under consideration at specific locations along each segment. Below is a summary of these improvements and comments made per segment:

Renton Segment:

- The study team is looking at ways to provide turn lanes, lengthen ramps near I-405 and better synchronize the signalization at the interchange.
- Consolidating access, relocating driveways, developing wider sidewalks and implementing transit improvements are also being considered.
- Linda Hansen noted that some parts of this segment and much of the SR 169 corridor have a rural feel. It would be more

appropriate in some areas to create walkways or trails, which are separated from the roadway, as opposed to sidewalks. This will create pedestrian corridors that are an amenity to this more rural community.

Cedar River Segment:

- Stabilizing steep slopes and landslide areas are a priority along this segment.
- Extending the Cedar River trail, to provide safer areas for pedestrians is also an option.
- Access management and visibility improvements are also being considered
- Chris Searcy asked why improvements at the Cedar Grove intersection were important if the level of service for that area is okay. Pamela Arora explained that signal timing and safety enhancements, as near term projects, were among the improvements at that intersection.
- Dave Zielinski asked why a widening project from 240th to 264th Street was not being considered. This should be added to the list for analysis.
- Jason Paulsen asked if the source of existing conditions data was different from what Jon Pascal used. It looks like there are 100% discrepancies for some areas. The data should be tied together before the project moves forward.

EDIT NOTE: As noted above, the ADTs listed along the SR 169 corridor in the powerpoint presentation were listed by segment. The previous Transpo Group Existing Conditions Memorandum had the ADTs listed by intersection. The corrected powerpoint presentation is available from WSDOT.

Maple Valley Segment:

- There should be an overpass or underpass project considered near the school in Maple Valley (close to 259th Street), and not at the Four-Corners area.

Black Diamond Segment:

- No comments were made.

Rural/Ag Segment:

- No comments were made.

Enumclaw Segment:

- No comments were made.

Project List

Seth handed out a list of current and potential transportation solutions with milepost, type of solution, and a description of the solution. The study team requested that the partners review the list to make sure each project is listed correctly (i.e. urgent need or useful thirty years from now), if there really is a need for the improvements, and if there are necessary improvements that are not on the list. The list is now a compilation of projects identified by the CWG partners, projects identified by WSDOT, and projects identified in response to comments received from the public at the open houses, through the website, or during stakeholder interviews.

Greg Wingard, from the Middle Green River Coalition, noted that bike improvements are necessary throughout the corridor. There are some areas along SR 169 that do not even have a shoulder to ride on, making the corridor unsafe for bikes or pedestrians.

Linda Hansen asked that the team not move forward with prioritizing projects until consideration is given to resource issues along the corridor. Some intersections identified for an improvement on the project list have ditched creeks or other environmental features that could easily be overlooked unless the team does some mapping and inventory work. WSDOT should not be put in a position of prioritizing a project that would create a taking under the Endangered Species Act. Seth agreed with Linda, noting that the team has done an inventory of watersheds, creeks and preserved farmland along the corridor to see if any improvements would impact these resources. Chris Searcy also reminded the group that environmental constraints are included in the evaluation criteria established by the CWG and will be used to screen projects during the analysis.

Next Steps

The SR 169 folio will be available to the partners by the end of the week. If there are any city-sponsored information booths at fairs or festivals in communities along SR 169, the folio may be a good piece to hand out.

In addition, Seth will be in contact with the jurisdictions about the need or desire to update each partner's city council or planning commission and if this would be more appropriate before or after the next open houses.

Cathy Higley also explained the next steps for the CWG. As the partners know, CWG meeting dates have been set through November. At the meeting on August 31st, the team will present six alternatives. With feedback from the CWG and after an initial screening analysis of the alternatives, the alternatives will be narrowed down to three. The three alternatives will be presented at the open houses for public comment. The previously established Evaluation Criteria will be used for a detailed analysis of the three alternatives and the first draft of the RDP will be completed in November and presented to the CWG at the November meeting. The team plans to have the SR 169 RDP finalized in December. WSDOT and Parsons know that this is an aggressive schedule but believes that the RDP can be completed in this time frame.

Dave Zielinski asked for the steps after the RDP is finalized. Chris Picard explained that the State Engineer, Northwest Region Administrator, and the State Planning Director will need to sign off on the document. Once this is done, the RDP will be an approved WSDOT document. Dave noted that the Maple Valley Community Development Director said that Maple Valley's Comprehensive Plan needed to be consistent with the RDP. This is a concern because if the RDP does not include major projects that are important to each specific jurisdiction how are the differences to be addressed? Chris Picard explained that each city's comprehensive plan needs to be consistent with the state plan. If the SR 169 RDP is completed in time to work its recommendations into the state plan, then yes, each city's comprehensive plan then essentially must be consistent with the RDP as well. The RDP can be amended at any time to include a project that is identified by a jurisdiction as important for the corridor.

Seth announced the dates for the second round of open houses.

EDIT NOTE: Since the CWG meeting the following dates, times, and sites are confirmed. There have been some changes.

All Open Houses will be held from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm on the dates and at the sites listed below:

- October 4th, Auburn, SR 164, SR 167, and SR 167 HOT Lanes,
Chinook Elementary School Gym
3502 Auburn Way South, Auburn, WA
- October 6th, Muckleshoot Indian Reservation, SR 164
Philip Starr Center, Cougar Room
39015 172nd Avenue SE
Auburn, WA
- October 11th, Enumclaw, SR 164 and SR 169
Thunder Mountain Middle School
Multi-Purpose Room
42018 264th Avenue SE
Enumclaw, WA
- October 13th, Renton, SR 169, SR 167, SR 167 HOT Lanes.
Renton Community Center
Banquet Room
1715 Maple Valley Highway

Action Items:

- Partners were asked to send any comments on the SR 169 Project list to Seth Stark (starks@wsdot.wa.gov, 206.464.1288) by Wednesday August 17th.
- The project team promised to review any discrepancies with the traffic count data given to the partners in the existing conditions memorandum and in the presentation today and make any necessary changes.
- CWG Meeting: August 31, 2005 from 1:00pm – 4:00pm (Renton Council Chambers)
- CWG Session Agenda
- SR 169 Project List

Upcoming Meetings

Handouts